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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 June 1959

DRAFT FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

SUBJECT: SNIE 100-7-59: SOVIET TACTICS ON BERLIN

THE PROBLEM

To estimate likely Soviet tactics on the Berlin issue, should the Geneva conference be terminated without result and without an agreement to a summit meeting.

Comment on the Assumptions in the Problem

1. The problem as stated assumes that the USSR has decided to allow the current Geneva talks to end in stalemate, and proposed to seek its aims in Berlin by resort to new lines of action. We do not believe that the Soviets have yet reached such a decision. Instead, we believe that they still hope to see a weakening of the Western stand and to open up fissures in Western unity which they can exploit. Accordingly, they probably intend some further probing of the Western position. This effort may be accompanied by more such off-stage threatening noises as those currently being provided by the Ulbricht-

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Khrushchev meeting. Our principal reason for believing that the Soviets do not want to break off the conference yet is that we think they continue to desire agreement for a summit meeting. They realize that, unless the conference can be described as ending on a positive note, the Western Powers will not agree to a summit.

2. If the Soviets do still desire to avoid a breakdown and to obtain a summit meeting, they could contribute to a "positive" outcome without actually abandoning the positions they have taken in the conference. The ministers could agree that their discussions had been "helpful", had "clarified the issues," and that hope of further progress at the summit was "justified." They might also agree not to attempt to change the status of Berlin by forceful or unilateral action pending the summit. Since we believe that the Soviets still desire to pursue their objectives on Berlin by negotiation, and ^{judge that they} would not think it advisable to increase the element of pressure or threat to Berlin beyond that already implicit in their attitude thus far, we think they will prefer an outcome for the Geneva meeting on the lines described above. With a summit meeting agreed to on these terms, they would then hope to press their case more successfully in the higher forum.

Questions Posed by the Problem

3. The situation assumed in the problem would represent an alternative development of Soviet tactics, and one which we recognize

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cannot be wholly excluded. If the Soviets now decided to allow the Geneva meeting to end in stalemate, and to abandon their demand for an early summit meeting, they would presumably do so on the calculation that a period of additional pressure on the Berlin problem, with consequent rising tensions, would finally induce the Western Powers to make substantial concessions. They might even anticipate creating a situation in which the Western Powers under pressure of a deepening crisis would be forced to come to the summit, and would be prepared there to accept a settlement far more favorable to the USSR than any they have so far contemplated. The main questions posed by this assumed Soviet course are: What degree of pressure would the Soviets think appropriate to achieve the result sought? What would be the measures they might undertake to apply this pressure?

The Alternative of Extreme Pressure at an Early Date

4. The most extreme degree of pressure which the Soviets might undertake in pursuit of the course of action described in Paragraph 3 could be developed in the following manner: They would proceed forthwith to conclude the separate peace treaty with the GDR which they have long threatened as their unavoidable recourse if the Western Powers were not responsive to the array of demands they have posed. Simultaneously with conclusion of the treaty they would turn over Berlin access controls

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to the GDR. The latter would then shortly begin to apply restrictions or conditions to access intended to test the determination of the Western Powers and to raise tensions still further. The USSR would repeat its warnings that any resort to force by the Western Powers would bring the Warsaw Pact into play. The Soviets would recognize that this degree of pressure would probably provoke a major crisis, but they would be acting on the estimate that the West would not resort to force and would finally accept in substance the Soviet demands for a revision of the status of Berlin. We exclude on the basis of estimates repeatedly made elsewhere that they would be willing to pursue this course to the point of accepting war with the Western Powers.

5. It can be argued in support of such an estimate of Soviet behavior in the wake of a Geneva stalemate that the Soviets have evidently believed, indeed that they provoked the Berlin crisis originally in the belief, that they had acquired a strengthened power position which would oblige the West to concede their demands in a showdown. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why the course of extreme pressure described in the preceding paragraph is probably not the one they would adopt. Their behavior as the Berlin crisis developed has suggested that they have become less certain that they could count on a failure of the West to react with force. Their whole conduct has indicated

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that they had decided that their aims must be achieved by negotiation without running extreme risks of war. To invoke the latter now would run counter to the whole political-ideological stance which the Khrushchev leadership has assumed, and would compromise the peaceloving image of itself which Soviet policy is trying to present in other parts of the world. Above all, even if a victory on the Berlin issue was won short of the brink of war, the post-crisis effects in the West would be most undesirable from the Soviet point of view. The Western Powers would probably be stimulated to close ranks and to increase their military effort. This latter would probably take the form of accelerated growth of the missile-nuclear threat to the Bloc in Western Europe, which the USSR has been trying hard to check. The outlook would be for an intensified period of cold war tensions. The implications of all this for the Bloc's current domestic and foreign policies would probably be seen by them as exceedingly adverse. Finally, this extreme course would not win for the GDR the international recognition and status which the Soviets have sought in order to relieve that satellite's internal problems and better qualify it as a Soviet instrument in the prolonged struggle for the whole of Germany which the Soviets recognize is inevitable. These considerations persuade us that a course of extreme pressure in the wake of a Geneva stalemate is not one the Soviets would be likely to pursue.

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The Alternative of Graduated, Protracted Pressure to Obtain Renewed Negotiations

6. Another alternative the Soviets would have should Geneva be stalemated and no summit be arranged would be to increase pressures on the Berlin issue gradually and only in such degree as to induce the Western Powers to resume negotiations later, either again at the ministers level but more probably at the summit, this time on terms more favorable to the Soviet positions. There would have to be a nice degree of calculation in this course. The measures taken to implement it would have to be of a kind which the West would not see as mere verbal threats. On the other hand, they should not be of a kind to present the West with a fait accompli in Berlin which would provoke a showdown prematurely. They should convince the West that the Soviets were preparing to foreclose the possibility of negotiation by unilateral action but that time and room remained for negotiations to avoid a showdown and perhaps to salvage something of Western interests. We think steps of this kind would be open to the Soviets to take, and that their course of action after a Geneva stalemate would be likely to be of this character.

7. The fact that the Geneva conference had ended in failure without any withdrawal of the Soviet demands on Berlin would in itself produce increased tensions, or could by appropriate Soviet pronouncements

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readily be made to do so. A Soviet campaign to build up pressure, accompanied by demands to resume negotiations, could then be undertaken by a series of steps. It could begin with propaganda blaming the Western Powers' rigidity for the breakdown at Geneva, warning that the danger of a clash over Berlin was increasing, and announcing that the USSR was still determined to achieve its demands in Berlin. Such propaganda could be orchestrated with harsher notes issuing from East Germany. The logical next step would relate to the negotiation of a separate peace treaty with the GDR, with intervals of time between the successive phases -- setting of a date for negotiations, then a negotiating conference and initialling, and finally ratification. Once this latter stage had been reached, full implementation would not need to be undertaken at once. The Soviets might first withdraw from East Berlin as an earnest of their intentions to implement fully. Later they could turn over access controls gradually to the GDR. When this was complete the latter could still refrain from any attempt to interfere with Western access, perhaps even announce that it would not do so for a certain period. At this stage the Western Powers could still believe that they would have room for negotiation since they have already agreed to accept GDR access control under some formulation of the agent theory. The steps in this whole series could be sharpened or moderated in impact depending on the treatment given them in Soviet pronouncements. The aim at all stages would be to convince the Western Powers that the possibility of ^{negotiation} remained open but was constantly narrowing.

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8. There would be implicit in this course a Soviet recognition that such mounting pressure might fail in its purpose of inducing the Western Powers to resume negotiations on terms more favorable to the Soviets. In this case, the steps taken would have advanced the Soviets toward a unilateral achievement of their aims in Berlin or would have prepared the basis for direct harassment or closure of access to Berlin along the lines discussed in Paragraph 4. However, the Soviets might believe that, even if they had to resort to such extreme pressure finally, the protracted guerilla warfare over the Berlin issue would have sowed sufficient alarm and disarray in the West so that it would be unable to confront the ultimate showdown with unity and firmness.

Summary

9. The views we have stated above can be summarized as follows:

- a) The Soviets are probably not yet ready to see the Geneva meeting end in stalemate and without any summit meeting having been arranged.
- b) Should they decide to accept or seek this outcome, they are not likely to resort at once to drastic action such as an attempt to restrict Western access to Berlin.
- c) They would be likely, in this case, to gradually increase the pressure on the Berlin issue by menacing steps intended to compel the Western Powers to resume negotiations, preferably at the summit, on terms more favorable to the Soviet position.

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